

# WILD TURKEY RESTORATION

The Eastern wild turkey was found throughout Iowa when the first settlers crossed the Mississippi River in the 1830's. Oak-hickory forests covered nearly 7 million acres and settler's records indicate turkeys occurred wherever timber existed. Turkeys may not have been as numerous in Iowa as in their primary range east of the Mississippi River, but they were plentiful enough to be used as table fare and appeared in markets for 50 cents apiece.

Uncontrolled hunting and habitat loss led to the elimination of turkeys from Iowa. By 1956, the primitive forests had been reduced to only 2.6 million acres and most likely a majority of the remaining forest was badly mismanaged through overgrazing. Turkeys were eliminated from some northeast Iowa counties by 1854, only 20 years after the first settlers arrived, and turkey populations were badly depleted in southern Iowa by 1900. Rugged topography protected some timbered parcels in northeast and south-central Iowa from mechanized clearing and turkeys may have survived had indiscriminate hunting been controlled. Unfortunately, hunting was not controlled and the last wild turkey harvested was in Lucas County in 1907. The last verified sighting of a wild turkey was in 1910, also in Lucas County.

## **1920-38**

As with many other midwestern states, the initial attempts to restore turkeys to available habitat were made with pen-reared turkeys. Although records are incomplete, they do show at least 6 releases made at several scattered locations across the state between 1920-38. All releases are assumed to have

failed and by 1960 there were still no wild turkeys existing in Iowa.

## **1960-66**

In the 1950's the rocket net, a new capture technique, was developed and allowed state agencies to capture and transplant native wild turkeys. The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), encouraged by success in other states with transplanted wild stock, attempted releases of non-Eastern subspecies in the 1960's. Thirty-nine Rio Grande turkeys from Texas were released in Allamakee County (release site A, Table 10.2) in 1960-61. Thirteen Merriam's turkeys were released in Lucas County and 8 Merriam's turkeys were released in Monona County in 1966 (releases B and C, respectively). Both subspecies failed to establish thriving populations or expand their distribution. Neither subspecies was adapted to Iowa's climate or habitat and experienced poor survival and no brood production.

## **1966**

Eleven wild turkeys caught in Missouri in 1966 were the first Eastern subspecies released in Iowa. They were released into Iowa's largest contiguous remaining timber block (Shimek State Forest, release site #1). Reproduction and poult survival of these turkeys was excellent and winter flock size increased dramatically reaching 400-500 turkeys by 1974.

## **1968**

The success of the Shimek Forest release led to a second stocking of another 19 Missouri turkeys (Eastern subspecies) into Stephens State Forest (SSF). The

turkeys did equally well in SSF and grew to a 400-500 bird flock by 1974. Within 3 years, turkeys at both forest sites began expanding onto adjacent private forests and by 1971 it was obvious that this was the correct subspecies to be used for all future restoration attempts.

### **1969**

In 1969, 10 supposedly Eastern lineage turkeys from North Dakota were released along the Upper Iowa River (release site D). Although the turkeys survived and reproduced their population growth was minimal compared to the turkeys released in Shimek and Stephens Forests.

### **1971**

In 1971, 10 additional North Dakota turkeys were released in Yellow River State Forest (release site E). The combined population growth of the turkeys from the 1969 and 1971 releases reached only 140 turkeys by 1974 and then declined. Apparently these turkeys were better adapted to North Dakota's open brushy habitat and were unable to adapt to Iowa's oak-hickory forest.

### **1972-2000**

Turkey numbers had grown rapidly enough at Shimek and Stephens Forests that by the winter of 1971-72 the IDNR was able to trap turkeys in-state and transplant to other potential habitats. Since 1965, 3,583 Eastern wild turkeys have been trapped and released at 260 different sites scattered across the state. Generally, turkeys have been released at the rate of 10 hens and 3 adult gobblers per site. Table 10.1 summarizes turkey releases by county including the 5 unsuccessful initial attempts (denoted by A - E on Table 10.2). Table 10.2 lists each release chronologically and the site

numbers correspond to the numbers on Figure 10.5.

## **OUT-OF-STATE SHIPMENTS**

Eastern turkeys adapted so well to habitat conditions in Iowa that by 1980 the DNR decided to start trading turkeys for other extirpated wildlife. Since 1980, 7,501 Iowa turkeys have been traded for prairie chickens, ruffed grouse, river otters, habitat monies, and sharp-tailed grouse with 11 states and 1 Canadian province. Table 10.3 summarizes wild turkey trades from 1980-2000. No out-of-state-shipments have occurred since 2001.

## **FUTURE**

The restoration of wild turkeys in Iowa is complete. Almost all suitable habitat has received at least 1 release of Eastern wild turkeys and all (since 1965) have been successful. Any additional releases will be coordinated by district management biologists within their own district. Most sites that will be stocked are very small parcels of timber or are marginal habitat. The goal now is to maintain and to wisely manage existing turkey populations.

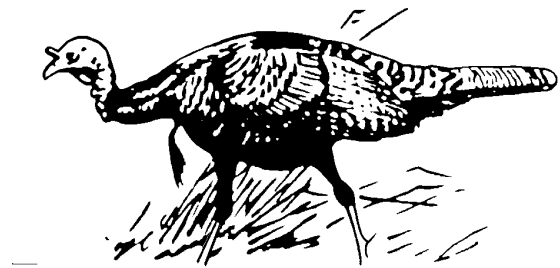


Table10.1 Wild turkey releases in Iowa, 1960-Present.

TOTAL					TOTAL				
COUNTY	RELEASES	HENS	TOMS	BIRDS	COUNTY	RELEASES	HENS	TOMS	BIRDS
ADAIR	3	31	11	42	JEFFERSON	1	10	2	12
ADAMS	5	39	19	58	JOHNSON	10	46	45	91
ALLAMAKEE	9	102	33	135	JONES	2	17	10	27
APPANOOSE	2	10	10	20	KEOKUK	6	47	30	77
AUDUBON	1	10	4	14	KOSSUTH	1	10	2	12
BENTON	2	15	6	21	LEE	3	20	10	30
BLACK HAWK	2	15	15	30	LINN	2	21	10	31
BOONE	4	33	21	54	LOUISA	5	43	21	64
BREMER	3	23	9	32	LUCAS	6	31	29	60
BUCHANAN	3	28	11	39	LYON	2	21	5	26
BUTLER	2	20	18	38	MADISON	4	39	18	57
CEDAR	6	23	27	50	MAHASKA	1	10	8	18
CERRO GORDO	1	7	8	15	MARION	6	47	40	87
CHEROKEE	1	8	4	12	MARSHALL	3	30	15	45
CHICKASAW	2	13	10	23	MILLS	2	20	6	26
CLAY	1	10	3	13	MITCHELL	3	29	16	45
CLAYTON	5	49	16	65	MONONA	4	33	13	46
CLINTON	5	53	20	73	MONROE	4	42	18	60
CRAWFORD	2	17	6	23	MONTGOMERY	1	10	4	14
DALLAS	6	72	30	102	MUSCATINE	2	25	6	31
DAVIS	3	29	18	47	PAGE	3	32	12	44
DELAWARE	2	20	6	26	PALO ALTO	2	20	6	26
DES MOINES	6	19	26	45	PLYMOUTH	2	20	6	26
DICKINSON	1	10	5	15	POLK	4	29	19	48
DUBUQUE	4	40	16	56	POTTAWATTAMIE	3	29	10	39
EMMET	6	48	34	82	POWESHIEK	4	28	14	42
FAYETTE	2	20	9	29	RINGGOLD	2	16	16	32
FLOYD	4	41	21	62	SAC	3	28	25	53
FRANKLIN	2	16	9	25	SHELBY	1	10	9	19
FREMONT	2	21	7	28	STORY	2	20	9	29
GREENE	2	20	10	30	TAMA	2	16	10	26
GUTHRIE	5	56	24	80	TAYLOR	1	11	2	13
HAMILTON	1	13	6	19	UNION	2	10	2	12
HANCOCK	2	20	9	29	VAN BUREN	2	13	11	24
HARDIN	3	32	11	43	WAPELLO	2	21	10	31
HARRISON	4	40	13	53	WARREN	7	59	34	93
HENRY	3	32	23	55	WASHINGTON	8	71	31	102
HOWARD	3	27	21	48	WEBSTER	1	11	2	13
HUMBOLT	1	11	3	14	WINNEBAGO	2	20	13	33
IDA	1	10	3	13	WINNESHIEK	6	46	36	82
IOWA	3	24	13	37	WOODBURY	3	29	5	34
JACKSON	7	64	20	84	WORTH	1	11	4	15
JASPER	6	49	42	91	WRIGHT	1	10	3	13
TOTAL					TOTAL				

Table10.2 Turkey release sites in Iowa, 1960-present.

(Year summaries prior to the first year given are archived at <http://www.iowadnr.com/wildlife/>)

SITE #	RELEASE SITE NAME	COUNTY	RELEASE DATE	SECT	TWNSHP	RANGE	SPECIES	SOURCE	HENS	TOMS	TOTAL
232	SHAMBAUGH	PAGE	97-JAN	34	68N	37W	EASTERN	V. B., HOWARD, WINN, FAY	10	6	16
233	PRAIRIE GOLD WILDLIFE AREA	PALO ALTO	97-FEB	1	96N	33W	EASTERN	DES M, JACK, FAY, WINN, BUCH	10	3	13
234	ACKLEY	FRANKLIN	97-FEB	35	90N	19W	EASTERN	JACK, DES M, BUCH, FAYETTE	6	3	9
235	RED BIRD FARMS	JOHNSON	98-JAN	25	79N	7W	EASTERN	UNKNOWN	0	1	1
236	IAAP	DES MOINES	98-JAN	2	69N	4W	EASTERN	LEE	0	3	3
237	SWEET MARSH	BREMER	98-JAN	21	93N	12W	EASTERN	CLAYTON	0	1	1
238	OWENS GROVE	CERRO GORDO	99-JAN	31	96N	19W	EASTERN	JACKSON, CLAYTON	7	8	15
239	STANSKY	WASHINGTON	99-JAN	30	77N	7W	EASTERN	CLAYTON, LEE	0	5	5
240	HAWKEYE	JOHNSON	99-JAN	28	80N	7W	EASTERN	LINN, WINNESHIEK	8	11	19
241	PERRY	BENTON	99-JAN	23	85N	12W	EASTERN	CLAYTON, DAVIS, IOWA	5	3	8
242	RED ROCK HEADQUARTERS	MARION	99-JAN	4	76N	20W	EASTERN	CLAYTON, DAVIS	3	4	7
243	INDIANOLA ACRES	WARREN	99-JAN	14	76N	24W	EASTERN	CLAYTON, DAVIS	6	3	9
244	WATER WORKS PARK	POLK	99-JAN	4	78N	24W	EASTERN	CLAYTON	10	5	15
245	TOOLESBORO	LOUISA	99-JAN	10	74N	2W	EASTERN	HENRY	11	7	18
246	BELL	WASHINGTON	99-JAN	12	75N	8W	EASTERN	HENRY, LEE	23	5	28
247	BLACK HAWK CREEK GREENBELT	BLACK HAWK	99-JAN	14	88N	14E	EASTERN	BUTLER, CLAYTON	4	9	13
248	EAST NODAWAY	ADAMS	00-FEB	19	71N	35W	EASTERN	DELAWARE, JACKSON, CLAYTON	13	3	16
249	BOONEVILLE	DALLAS	00-FEB	30	78N	26W	EASTERN	IOWA, DELAWARE, LINN	12	3	15
250	IOWA ARMY AMMUNITION PLANT	DES MOINES	00-JAN	2	69N	3W	EASTERN	DES MOINES	0	5	5
251	BRUSH CREEK	DES MOINES	00-FEB	16	68N	3W	EASTERN	DES MOINES	0	1	1
252	INGHAM HIGH	EMMET	00-JAN, 00-FEB	12	98N	33W	EASTERN	FAYETTE	5	5	10
253	MOOREHEAD PARK	IDA	00-JAN, 00-FEB	10	87N	40W	EASTERN	LINN	10	3	13
254	PICYUNE CREEK	JOHNSON	00-JAN, 00-FEB	19	78N	6W	EASTERN	DES MOINES, JACKSON, CLAYTON	9	3	12
255	HIGHWAY V45	KEOKUK	00-FEB	14	76N	12W	EASTERN	CEDAR, LINN, ALLAMAKEE, CLAYTON	7	4	11
256	ROCK CREEK DRAINAGE	KEOKUK	00-FEB	29	76N	12W	EASTERN	ALLAMAKEE	8	3	11
257	MIDDLE TARKIO RIVER	PAGE	00-FEB	6	70N	37W	EASTERN	DELAWARE, DES M, JACK, CLAYTON	12	3	15
258	NORTH HINTON	PLYMOUTH	00-JAN, 00-FEB	5	90N	46W	EASTERN	LINN, CEDAR	10	3	13
259	DAVIS CREEK DRAINAGE	WASHINGTON	00-JAN, 00-FEB	6	76N	6W	EASTERN	DES MOINES, CLAYTON	10	4	14
260	NORTH WEST CHESTER	WASHINGTON	00-FEB	29	76N	8W	EASTERN	ALLAMAKEE, CLAYTON	8	3	11
261	RUSS WILDLIFE AREA	WINNEBAGO	00-FEB	35	98N	25W	EASTERN	CLAYTON, LINN	10	6	16
262	WICKERSHAM FMA #2	MARSHALL	01-FEB	24	83N	19W	EASTERN	LINN	0	5	5
<b>TOTAL</b>									<b>2351</b>	<b>1232</b>	<b>3583</b>

Table 10.3 Wild turkeys shipped out-of-Iowa, 1980-99.

YEAR	# HENS	# TOMS	TOTAL TURKEYS	RECEIVING STATE	IOWA RECEIVED
1980-81	41	9	50	KANSAS	Prairie Chickens (102)
1981-82	0	0	0		
1982-83	16	8	24	MICHIGAN	Ruffed Grouse (139)
1983-84	46	15	61	MICHIGAN	Ruffed Grouse (83)
1984-85	24	8	32	KENTUCKY	River Otters (16)
	11	3	14	ONTARIO	No Trade
1985-86	102	45	147	KENTUCKY	River Otters (60)
	12	5	17	ONTARIO	River Otters
1986-87	34	12	46	INDIANA	Ruffed Grouse (136)
	85	19	104	KENTUCKY	River Otters (40)
	6	13	19	MICHIGAN	Prairie Chickens (29)
1987-88	38	12	50	INDIANA	Ruffed Grouse (131)
	61	20	81	KENTUCKY	River Otters (60)
	17	7	24	MICHIGAN	Prairie Chickens (123)
	236	68	304	TEXAS	HABITAT \$ (150,000)
1988-89	12	4	16	ILLINOIS	HABITAT \$ (8,000)
	38	12	50	INDIANA	Ruffed Grouse (107)
	156	47	203	KENTUCKY	HABITAT \$ (100,000)
	99	25	124	MICHIGAN	Prairie Chickens (102)
	337	88	425	TEXAS	HABITAT \$ (212,000)
1989-90	141	51	192	KENTUCKY	HABITAT \$ (100,000)
	9	4	13	S. DAKOTA	Sharp-tailed grouse (36)
	216	53	269	TEXAS	HABITAT \$ (134,500)
1990-91	294	85	379	KENTUCKY	HABITAT \$ (189,500)
	139	48	187	TEXAS	HABITAT \$ (88,500)
1991-92	19	28	47	KENTUCKY	HABITAT \$ (23,500)
	203	25	228	TEXAS	HABITAT \$ (143,000)*
1992-93	156	50	206	KENTUCKY	HABITAT \$ (103,000)
	19	2	21	MICHIGAN	HABITAT \$ (10,500)
	120	31	151	N. CAROLINA	HABITAT \$ (75,500)
	15	5	20	S. DAKOTA	Sharp-tailed grouse (40)?
	321	80	401	TEXAS	HABITAT \$ (300,500)**
1993-94	161	49	210	KENTUCKY	HABITAT \$ (105,000)
	0	4	4	MICHIGAN	HABITAT \$ (2,000)
	317	83	400	TEXAS	HABITAT \$ (200,000)
1994-95	297	104	401	TEXAS	HABITAT \$ (193,750)
	130	42	172	KENTUCKY	HABITAT \$ (78,000)
1995-96	83	26	109	LOUISIANA	HABITAT \$ (54,500)
	300	104	404	TEXAS	HABITAT \$ (202,000)
	66	26	92	KENTUCKY	HABITAT \$(46,000)
1996-97	458	140	598	TEXAS	HABITAT \$(299,000)
	30	8	38	WASHINGTON	HABITAT \$(19,000)
1997-98	269	75	344	TEXAS	HABITAT \$(172,000)
	76	24	100	WASHINGTON	HABITAT \$ (50,000)
1998-99	198	25	223	TEXAS	HABITAT \$(111,500)
	12	4	16	OKLAHOMA	HABITAT \$ ( 8,000)
	46	15	61	S. DAKOTA	Sharp-tailed grouse
1999-00	290	73	363	WASHINGTON	HABITAT \$(181,500)
	45	16	61	S. DAKOTA	Sharp-tailed grouse
TOTAL	5801	1700	7501		

\* Includes \$29,000 from Texas for turkeys shipped to Texas from Wisconsin for pheasants shipped to Wisconsin from Iowa.

\*\* Includes \$100,000 from Texas for Wisconsin turkeys.

